

## John Ashcroft — The Best Man For the Job

(No. 5, January 16, 2001)

*The following are recent quotes on President-Elect Bush's nomination of Senator John Ashcroft for the office of U.S. Attorney General.*

*(Note: today's version is longer than usual due to the three-day holiday weekend.)*

"I think that we have a right to look at John Ashcroft's religion. As far as I know, there isn't anything with his religious beliefs that would cause us to vote against him. ... [ ... ]

"... At this stage, I think we should go into this, Republicans and Democrats, as jurors. I hope the Republicans will look at this hearing, as I believe that I'm going to, to see if the man, there's anything to disqualify him. At this stage, I don't see anything."

*(Sen. Harry Reid, Fox News Sunday, 1/14/01)*

"In fact, not only did Senator Ashcroft oppose the nominee on philosophical grounds, Judge (Ronnie) White voted to overturn several capital convictions, his public record on civil rights should halt such outrageous implications. As attorney general of Missouri, Mr. Ashcroft was a vigorous enforcer of the state's anti-discrimination laws. As governor, he appointed innumerable African-Americans to high office, including the first black justice on the state supreme court. And during his time in the U.S. Senate, Mr. Ashcroft voted to confirm 26 of the 28 black appointments to the federal bench during the Clinton administration. Opposing two out of 28 black judicial appointees is hardly evidence of racial bias.

"Two of Justice Clarence Thomas's most vociferous critics when he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court were Senators Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Patrick Leahy of Vermont, both of whom voted against his nomination.

"If John Ashcroft is to be branded a racist for his principled opposition to Ronnie White, may we assume that Edward Kennedy and Patrick Leahy opposed Clarence Thomas because he was black?"

*(The Providence Journal-Bulletin, Editorial, 1/14/01)*

"Former Sen. John Ashcroft, nominated by George W. Bush to become the nation's next attorney general, deserves a fair hearing this week before the Senate Judiciary Committee, but if the exploitative and savage rhetoric preceding the meeting foretells anything, it's unclear he'll get it. [ ... ]

"Last week special-interest groups representing almost every left-wing cause imaginable — in other words, the Democratic base — galvanized to defeat Ashcroft. And his former colleagues on Capitol Hill, most of whom thought him magnanimous when he refused to challenge his senatorial defeat by a dead man, are today content to let their backers savage him while they pretend to be above it all. ( ... )

"... This is a man whose appreciation for the sanctity of life has been known for years, whose opposition to big labor and gay rights is clear. But he is also a man who served two terms as Missouri's attorney general and then two terms as governor before becoming a U.S. senator. Missourians elected him knowing well his moral and political dispositions, and he is extraordinarily qualified to become attorney general. ( ... )

"How absurd to vilify a man who has taken stock of and trusts his convictions, especially a man who has been consistent in his pronouncements and moderate in his actions.

" 'It is against my religion to impose religion on people,' Ashcroft wrote in his 1998 book, Lessons from a Father to His Son. 'I also believe that I need to invite God's presence into whatever I'm doing, including the world of politics.'

"Rather than derailing his chances, such conviction, such rare nobility, should shore up his confirmation."

*(The Tampa Tribune, Commentary, 1/14/01)*

"Barring any major 'dirt' from the intensive mining now under way, Ashcroft's Senate reputation for integrity may trump ideological concerns. That is, after all, the strongest possible attribute for Justice. If he commits to enforcing the law of the land, the Senate has a legitimate right to let the president-elect have Ashcroft as his attorney general."

*(The Buffalo News, Editorial, 1/13/01)*

"Those who are attacking Sen. Ashcroft need to begin telling the truth.

"For several years, Ashcroft's wife has been a professor at Howard University, a traditionally black institution in Washington. It is also on record that Ashcroft voted to confirm 26 black judicial appointees made by President Clinton. As governor, he signed Missouri's Martin Luther King Jr. holiday into law.

"But he was forced to object to one judicial nominee because, as a Missouri Supreme Court justice, Ronnie White voted against capital punishment for a convicted cop-killer. Seventy-five percent of the police chiefs in Missouri also opposed White's nomination.

"Fifty-four U.S. senators voted against White. Are all 54 racist?"

*(Greensboro News & Record, Editorial, 1/13/01)*

"The attacks on Attorney General-designate John Ashcroft are unwarranted and unjust. Throughout his career as a public servant, John Ashcroft has demonstrated repeatedly that he is a man of the deepest integrity and principle, who is committed to preserving the rule of law. To suggest otherwise is to impugn his character. ( ... )

"... Ashcroft's religious faith, moreover, is hardly unusual. Again, it is a faith that he shares with millions of his fellow Americans. To suggest that deeply held convictions of faith disqualify John Ashcroft not only violates the Constitution's ban on religious tests for public office but also

embraces a kind of genteel bigotry that seeks to marginalize millions of Americans of like-minded evangelical faith."

*(Sun-Sentinel, Editorial, 1/13/01)*

"Today American Christians in virtually every historic tradition — Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant — worship Jesus Christ as King of the universe. What's shocking is not Sen. Ashcroft's declaration, but rather that he has to defend his religious convictions in the public arena. If the particular religious identity, beliefs, or practices of any nominee to a presidential cabinet position are now grist for the mills of his desperate opponents, then the U.S. Constitution itself is in jeopardy. Article VI of the Constitution prohibits any 'religious test' for public office. The public statements and activities of many of Sen. Ashcroft's opponents are in direct contravention of that venerable constitutional principle.

"The National Clergy Council prays that cooler heads and more charitable hearts will prevail this week, and urges the U.S. Senate to consent to the nomination of Sen. Ashcroft, a man of exemplary personal character and a public servant of unquestionable competence and expertise."

*(Fr. Alexander F. C. Webster, Ph.D., Member of the Board of Scholars, National Clergy Council, press conference statement, 1/15/01)*

"When John Ashcroft is sworn in as the country's next Attorney General, as I believe he will, he will take a solemn oath to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States, ... . Nothing in Mr. Ashcroft's record as a two-term attorney general and two-term governor of Missouri so much as hints that he will do anything less.

"John Ashcroft is perhaps the best qualified nominee for Attorney General of the past 30 years. He will make a superb Attorney General who will faithfully enforce the laws of the land fully, fairly and, most importantly, equally. If reason, common sense and fair play mean anything in Washington, then the Senate will overwhelmingly confirm John Ashcroft as the next Attorney General of the United States."

*(American Renewal President Ken Connor, PR Newswire, 1/16/01)*

"(Sen. Arlen) Specter said he had talked with Ashcroft in 'great detail' about enforcement of civil rights and abortion laws. Specter cited Ashcroft's support of a bankruptcy measure last fall that would prevent violent abortion clinic protesters from filing for bankruptcy to protect their assets against lawsuits.

" 'He cast a vote on the bankruptcy bill which pretty solidly supports his commitment to enforce the abortion laws,' Specter said. 'It shows he doesn't have any tolerance for people that violate the laws.' "

*(Rachel Smolkin, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 1/16/01)*

"It is a tragedy that someone as ethical and committed to the rule of law as John Ashcroft has become the target of liberal special interest groups who continue to viciously attack his character. ... There has rarely been a nominee more qualified for the office of Attorney General than John Ashcroft. I hope the United States Senate does not play politics with his nomination and expeditiously votes to confirm him."

*(Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, U.S. Newswire, 1/15/01)*

"The Law Enforcement Alliance of America (LEAA) has endorsed President-elect George W. Bush's choice to head up the Justice Department. 'Because of his proven tough-on-crime record, not only in the U.S. Senate, but also as Missouri's former Governor and Attorney General, John Ashcroft has consistently demonstrated his profound respect for the sanctity of the law,' said Jim Fotis, LEAA's executive director.

"Fotis, a highly decorated retired police officer, went on to say that 'Because the "law and order" issue is fundamental to the demands of an Attorney General, Senator Ashcroft exemplifies the kind of individual who can be trusted to uphold the law. There is no doubt that John Ashcroft will be a guardian of liberty and equal justice.' "

*(U.S. Newswire, 1/15/01)*

"Charles Evers, the brother of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, is right about John Ashcroft, and they know it. Mr. Evers, the former mayor of Fayette, Miss., sent letters yesterday on behalf of Mr. Ashcroft to two members of the Judiciary Committee, Teddy Kennedy of Massachusetts, who with Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts guards the pure blue flame of morality as Democrats understand it, and Orrin Hatch of Utah, the Republican chairman. 'Senator Ashcroft is a man of tremendous experience and high integrity,' Mr. Evers wrote. 'The allegations of racism against him are not supported by facts. ...' "

*(Wesley Pruden, The Washington Times, 1/16/01)*

Staff Contact: Lauren DeBellis - 4-2429